Drowning and near drowning incidents are a tragic result of a child submerged in water. Drowning is frequently one of the most preventable hazards with active supervision and simple barriers installed, but one of the quickest, most silent and irreversible injuries. It can take less than a few minutes for death or irreversible brain damage to occur. On average about 3,500 injuries to children occur annually due to a near-drowning incident and about 800 children under 15 die from unintentional drowning according to the National Center for Health Statistics and the National Center for Injury Prevention. Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death among children ages 1 to 14 years old. In some states with an increased number of pools, drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children under age 5. According to the CPSC, approximately 115 children drown from other hazards in the home besides pools. About two-thirds occur in bathtubs.

Children can drown in just a few inches of water. Child drowning is a silent death. There’s no splashing to alert anyone that the child is in trouble. Layers of protection are very important in preventing drowning. Parents need to be extra vigilant in the warmer months when many drownings occur. It is also recommended that parents learn CPR.

Inside the Home
Infants under the age of one are at greatest risk for drowning during a bath, in a bucket or in a toilet bowl. Not yet highly mobile, most of these infants have been momentarily left in a bath tub.

- Young children must NEVER be left alone in a bathtub even for a moment
  - Young children should never be left in the care of other young children during a bath.
  - Always keep a baby in arm’s reach.
  - Many infants have drowned during a momentary lapse of supervision where the parent or caregiver leaves to answer the phone, door or to get a towel.
  - If a phone or door must be answered during bath-time, there needs to be a cordless phone in the bathroom before the bath begins or the baby must be removed from the water before answering the phone or door.
  - All necessary supplies must be gathered within reach before filling the tub.
  - The tub should only be filled as much as required for bathing the infant.
  - The tub should be completely emptied before the parent leaves the room when bath time is finished. Children have drowned in tubs when the water is draining.
  - If a bath seat is used, it is designed to only give a helping hand. It will not keep an infant from drowning. Parents should carefully review the manufacturer’s instructions and warnings.

- Buckets of liquid should never be left accessible to children. Particularly the large stable 5 gallon buckets have been the source of numerous drownings. It is difficult for top-heavy infants to free themselves.

- According the CPSC, toilets are often overlooked as a drowning hazard in the home. Toilets should be latched or bathrooms doors should be kept closed and latched to prevent access to young children.
  - It is difficult for top-heavy toddlers to free themselves if they fall headfirst into the toilet. Children like all kinds of water.
• Parents should consider adding a lock on the bathroom door (out of the reach of young children) to deny access to the bathroom.

• Childhood drownings also occur in other places with water: coolers, sinks and fish tanks.

Pools and Spas

• Statistics from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) show that children between 1 and five years old are most likely to drown in a residential swimming pool. Over 50% of these deaths occur in the child’s own home pool and another 30% in the pool of a neighbor, friend or family member. Less than 10% occur in public pools.

• The National Safe Kids Campaign; Clear Danger publication reported that in approximately 90% of pool submersions a parent or care-giver claimed to have been supervising the child at the time.

• Besides pools, drowning occur in spas/hot tubs, canals, ponds, streams, oceans or fountains.

• Layers of protection are needed to keep children from all potential drowning sources.
  • Installation of pool and waterway fences should be one of these layers.
  • Numerous studies have confirmed that four-sided isolation fencing around home pools could prevent 50 percent to 90 percent of childhood drownings and near-drownings.
  • When used properly, door locks, door alarms, pool alarms, automatic pool covers, and self-closing self-latching gates add extra layers of protection.

• Children have become entrapped in pool or hot tubs drains.
  • Pools and hot tubs should be inspected by a professional for entrapment hazards and to insure they are up-to-date with devices to help prevent drain entrapment.

• The importance of CPR and, as always, supervision should also be stressed. Survival depends on rescuing the child quickly and restarting the breathing process, even while the child is still in the water. Seconds count in preventing death or brain damage.

• If a child is ever momentarily missing, look in the pool or other water locations first.

• Keep a cordless phone and safety pole by the pool.

• Parents need to stay within arm’s reach of a young child who cannot swim. Lifeguards are there for emergency purposes. Parents are the primary supervisors. Never use flotation devices as a substitute for supervision.

• At parties, be clear with your communication for who is in charge of watching the children. The supervising parents should stay within arm’s reach of the child/children.

• Even small pools such as wading pools are a hazard. Wading pools should be emptied when you are finished swimming.

• Many communities have enacted safety regulations governing residential swimming pools.

• Resource: [www.poolsafety.gov](http://www.poolsafety.gov)

Natural Bodies of Water

• Again, layers of protection are needed to keep children from all potential drowning sources.

• Life jackets are critical for children when on the water.

• Children should learn how to swim, but should not be considered water-safe.

• No one should ever swim alone.